

Awkward people who like each other and black coffee

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Summary:

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Awkward people who like each other and black coffee

Author's Note:

Day 2 of Jancy Fanfic Week has the theme "Cliche romance trope" so on a prompt, here's a coffee shop AU featuring awkward Nancy and Jonathan skittering around each other. And a meddling Barb!

Barb goes to secure their usual table by the window while she gets in line to order for them both. There's a new guy working behind the counter. He's kind of cute, she notes as she studies him while waiting her turn. His face got sharp, angular features. His shaggy hair looks slightly unkempt and seems to move just a bit unruly on it's own when he quickly moves around, making the order for the person in front of her. She realizes she might have stared just a second too long when he looks up, meets her eye and with a small crooked smile asks what she'll have.

"One double non-fat vanilla latte with extra foam," she gets Barb's ridiculous order out of the way first. "And one tall black coffee."

He chuckles slightly at the disparate order and she can't help but smile. He's got dimples, she notices. Not that it matters.

"Coming right up."

He works quickly and effortlessly. There's something harmonious about watching someone be completely in sync, in the flow, at their job like him.

"One double non-fat vanilla latte with extra foam... and one tall black coffee," he repeats when he places the mugs on the counter.

"Thanks," she says while grabbing them. Glancing down at his nametag she adds: "Jonathan" with a slight smile. He smiles back shyly.

She sits down opposite Barb. Her best friend immediately launches back into the retelling of how her day had been, which she'd started on before they separated at the counter. She listens intently to her friend... but she also can't help sneaking the occasional glance over to him. She's got a perfect view of the counter from where she's sitting.

"... plus at lunch I got a text from Lisa where she was all "sorry I've been kind of MIA lately but do you want to get together this weekend" and I don't know what to answer her because I mean I... Nancy? Nance?"

"Huh? Sorry," she didn't even realize she'd stopped listening until Barb shakes her out of her thoughts. Or, thoughts and thoughts... they're not exactly thoughts, just that she can't help but notice how good he looks in profile and isn't his hair maybe a lighter shade of brown than it looked before. Maybe it was the lighting?

"I've always said it's your attentiveness and willingness to listen that will make you a great reporter some day," Barb jokes in her dry manner.

"I was listening," she defends herself.

"Okay, what was I saying?"

"That uh... the lab you did in class today was really interesting and that the annoying girl wanted your notes again."

"Yeah, that was awhile ago."

"And that um... your mom called and asked if you'd come home and visit soon?" She takes a shot. Barb's mom usually calls on Wednesday so it's an educated guess at least.

"Wrong-o, thanks for playing though. I was saying that Lisa texted and wants to see me this weekend."

"Why would Linda want to go out with you I thought she was..." She starts to ask while she just happens to glance over to the counter again.

"Lisa! God, what's up with you, what are you even looking at?" Barb wonders and promptly turns her head to see what's distracting her.

"Uh-huh," Barb smirks at her when she turns back.

"What?"

"Nothing. Nice to see you've moved on from the Steve Harrington type at least..."

"Shut up, that was in high school."

"Ah yes, I suppose we all go through our phases..."

"Exactly, I didn't say anything about Angela."

"Fine, I'll grant you that. It's just... interesting to see how easily smitten you are."

"I'm not smitten!"

"Okay."

"I'm not!"

"Okay."

"Whatever, what were you saying about Lisa?"

"Nah, forget Lisa, this is fun. What do you like about him?" Barb pushes, leaning forward on the table.

"I don't!"

"Sure you don't. Is it the vaguely artsy look?"

"Shut up."

"The messy hair?"

"Shut up."

"The slim but toned body with thin yet probably strong arms?"

"I thought you were gay?" She deadpans.

"Yes, but I've still got eyes, don't I?" Barb shoots back and waggles her eyebrows which makes her laugh out loud. Barb always makes her laugh.

"Oh, he looked over here just now," Barb informs her when she's collected herself.

"What?"

"He looked over when you cackled like a hyena."

"I did not cackle like a hyena!"

"Debatable. Point is, he's totally checking you out too."

"No he's not! And what do you mean 'too'? I'm not checking him out. You're the one obsessed with his body."

"Just making observations. Ugh, just admit that you think he's cute."

"Fine. He's cute. Happy?"

"Yes. God, I can't even with straight people sometimes. Why are you like this?"

"Oh you're one to talk, Ms. Why-Hasn't-Lisa-Texted-Me-Yet-Why-Hasn't-Lisa-Texted-Me-Yet-Oh-God-Lisa-Just-Texted-Me-What-Should-I-Do?"

"Shut up. But seriously though, what should I do?"

"See her this weekend since you won't shut up about her. But try and find out why she went MIA, and if she pulls it again next week it's a problem."

"Alright. Thanks for the advice. Now let me solve the problems in your love life."

"I don't have-" She starts.

"... a love life." Barb finishes.

"Screw you."

"You should ask him out."

"What? No!"

"Why not?"

"I don't know him!"

"So you should fix that."

"Would you please just drop it?"

"Fine."

Barb does drop it, for the most part. But then when they're leaving she just happens to make eye contact with the barista guy. Jonathan. And he smiles a bit again and it makes her smile shyly too. And curse Barb for noticing and not letting go of it the whole way back to the apartment they share.

He's working the next time she comes in aswell. It's a few days later and now she's alone, just stopping by on her way home from Columbia. It's her favourite coffee shop, it's nice and on her way and she really needs some caffeine now after a long day of studying at the library. Damnit if she's not pleased to see him behind the counter. Just a little bit. She tries not think about why.

"Hi," he greets her. Looks like he recognized her. Not that it pleases her. Because it doesn't. Most certainly not.

"Hey," she answers and tries not smile too wide. "A tall black coffee

to go.”

He nods, smiles and mumbles something to himself.

”What’s that?” She wonders.

”Oh, nothing. It was just... I was right.”

”Right? About what?”

”I figured that you had the black coffee and the double non-fat vanilla latte with extra foam was for your friend,” he looks a bit embarrassed as he explains. She chuckles a bit. Can’t believe he remembered the order.

”Yep, you’re right.”

”You seemed like more the black coffee type than the ridiculous latte variant type.”

”True,” she laughs. ”Is everyone a coffee type?”

”I don’t know. I guess some are tea types instead.”

”Right,” she smiles. Why can’t she stop smiling. ”What are you?”

”Black coffee too. With a bit of milk in it if I’m in a hurry and have to cool it down.”

”Huh. Isn’t being a barista and taking it black kind of like working at McDonald’s and liking a plain cheeseburger the best?”

”Fair point I guess,” he shrugs and smiles. ”But I think working at McDonald’s quickly puts you off all burgers.”

”Probably,” she tries to contain her grin somewhat. ”Well uh, thanks. I have to go,” she grabs her cup and turns to leave. ”Bye, Jonathan,” she adds without thinking.

”Bye uh...” he trails off.

”Nancy,” she fills in.

"Bye, Nancy."

Since they tell each other everything she tells Barb out this second encounter when she gets home. Which she comes to regret as it gives new life to Barb's "helping her with her love life" project ie pestering her about asking him out. It's their usual place so it's not long before they return again. This time he's not behind the counter.

"You're disappointed," Barb notes.

"What? No, shut up."

"Admit it, you wished to see him."

"Ugh, would you please drop it?"

"Dropping it, dropping it!" Barb holds out her hands innocently.

She's sitting with her back towards the door reading 'Personnel only'. She hears it open and sees Barb's eyes widen a fraction at something behind her.

"Hey Nancy."

She whips her head around. He's clearing the table next to them.

"Hi Jonathan."

Their eyes lock for a second and damnit is she smiling like an idiot again? Then he shyly looks down before heading back through the door with the dirty dishes he collected. She looks back at Barb, who has *that* look about her.

"Quiet," she reprimands.

"I wasn't saying anything," Barb protests.

"Yes but you were *thinking*."

A couple of days later Barb comes home and interrupts her studying.

"Okay I went by for a closer evaluation today," she opens with.

"What?" She asks, very confused.

"I went by the coffee place to have a closer look at him."

"What?!"

"And I stand firm with my first opinion, you need to ask him out. He's not a freak or a creep, I have a good radar for that. And he seems really nice."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing! I was real smooth."

"Yes if it's one thing you're most known for it's your smoothness..."

"Well, he recognized me as 'Nancy's friend', which gave me some light high school flashbacks, but I'll give him a pass on that because he also remembered my order. I mean people with that good of a memory always kind of freak me out just a little bit, but not in this case."

"I have a good memory," she points out.

"Yeah, and you kind of freak me out. But hey, that's one more thing you two have in common!"

"One more thing?"

"Yeah, apart from the fact that you're both awkward people who like each other and black coffee."

Barb won't let it go and each time they go there and he's working

they keep exchanging nervous smiles and fleeting glances.

"Hi Nancy," he smiles when they walk in there a Monday after a few weeks of awkward encounters. "The usual?"

"Yeah, thanks," she answers and tries not to dwell on his smile or his dimples or the fact that she now has *the usual*. "Good day?" She inquires.

"Long day, but at least my shift's almost over. How 'bout you?"

"This is the best part," she says without thinking. She quickly reaches for the cups he just placed on the counter to play it off like she meant the coffee. She thinks she fails spectacularly. Customers behind her starts grumbling so she moves aside and goes to sit down with Barb.

"Watching you two is like seeing an off-off-off-Broadway show."

"Good God."

"Reason #437 for you to ask him out: if it goes well and you guys fall in love we'll get free coffee," Barb says.

"I hate you."

They drink their coffee. She keeps glancing over to him. She can't seem to stop. Why is she like this? She's not usually like this.

"Nance. Ask him out," Barb eventually says, firmly.

"Uh..." she hesitates.

"I can't stand this anymore. Ask him out or else I'll have to kill you."

"Ugh, fine!" She's finally had it, not so much with Barb as herself.

She strides up to the counter, because once she's made her mind up

about something she just does it. There's an old man waiting to be served by him, but he looks up at her when she approaches.

"Hey, do you want go out sometime?" She asks him point blank.

For the first time she sees him screw up. As soon as she's finished asking he drops the cup, his hand shoots forward and he burns himself with hot coffee. He curses slightly, flickers with his gaze and automatically apologizes to the old man, who's looking more amused than annoyed. He fixes the old man a new cup quickly.

"Uh sorry, um-" he looks at her, flustered. He shakes his burnt hand which must hurt. "Sorry, just uh, one second," he looks down at his hand and promptly turns around and walks into the back. One of his coworkers comes out in his place. She sits back down opposite Barb, who's trying and failing at holding back laughter.

"Like I said, an off-off-off-Broadway show," Barb gets out when she's collected herself somewhat.

"Why do I do these things?" She mutters and buries her face in her arms on the table.

"Nance," Barb starts.

"What?" She asks without looking up.

"Uh, hey, Nancy?" It's him. She shoots back up.

"Oh, hey."

He's standing there, without his work apron, holding a bag of ice against his hand.

"Sorry about that, are you okay?" She quickly asks.

"Oh, yeah yeah, um, not your fault, I was just uh, not expecting it."

"Sorry."

"And um... I'd love to... if the offer still stands, I mean. To... go out. With you."

"Oh! Great!" She smiles. "How is..." she starts but Barb interrupts.

"When do you get off work?"

"Oh, uh, now," he answers before she can admonish Barb.

"Good, you two should go out now," Barb continues.

"Barb!" She hisses.

"If you don't already have plans?" Barb ignores her and continues on Jonathan.

"Uh, no, no I don't have any plans."

"Good! Neither does she. You guys should go grab a beer."

"Barb..."

"At Hendrie's, you should go to Hendrie's," Barb continues and nails her with a look.

She sighs.

"Uh, do you want to? Right now," she asks him.

"Uh, yeah, I'd love to, if you want to..."

"Yeah."

"Great!" Barb clasps her hands together. "It's a date! Well, get a move on," she continues and gets up from her seat.

Barb is in full Mother Hen mode and waves them off on the sidewalk, to her great embarrassment. They walk down the street to Hendrie's. He ditches the icebag in a trash can outside. They walk in and get two beers, sitting down at a table.

"So... wow this is awkward," she laughs.

"Maybe a little," he grins.

"Sorry about Barb by the way. She likes to meddle."

"No, it's fine, maybe... a little meddling is good sometimes."

"Yeah, maybe I needed a little push."

"I would've needed several, so I'm glad she gave you one instead," he smiles.

"To be honest she nagged me for awhile about this," she admits, cheeks getting red.

"Really?"

"Well yeah, since I first saw you basically," she admits. Why does she admit so much? There's just something about him, his gentle smile and nice eyes that makes her feel way to comfortable.

"Wow, I uh, I'm glad, I... kind of hope that you'll come in every time I work," he admits in turn.

"I always hope for you to be behind the counter when I come in."

They smile shyly at each other for a second.

"How's your hand?" She thinks to ask. He's got the cold beer bottle pressed against the burn.

"It's okay."

"I'm still sorry about that. The whole, catching you off guard thing."

"Don't be. To be honest I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner. I'm nervous every time I take your order that I'll screw up."

"You never do."

"Well it's hard to screw up black coffee."

"Granted, but Barb says you make her freak order perfect too, so."

"Glad to hear that."

"So um, why barista?" She asks.

"Oh, I'm just doing it to put my self through college. I'm a photography major at NYU."

"Oh, cool!"

"What do you do?"

"Journalism at Columbia."

"Wow, Pulitzer's school."

"Yeah, no pressure," she jokes. He chuckles.

"So, what kind of journalist? Print or TV or...?"

"Print, hopefully. If the whole medium isn't dead by the time I graduate."

"Tell me about it," he smirks.

"So what kind of photography do you do?"

"Oh, different stuff uh, I like to shoot in the street a lot. I prefer people over landscapes and such."

"Why?"

"They're more interesting to me. The photos say more."

"Cool."

"How did you get into journalism?"

"I always liked to write. And I like... knowing stuff. Getting to the bottom of things."

"Cool, so you want to do investigative stuff?"

"Well yeah, that's the dream at least. Tough business though, you don't get there rightaway."

"Bet you will."

Her nerves, and seemingly his too, quell the more they talk. They talk about their families, turns out they have little brothers the same age. And with similar interests. She even tells him she thinks her parents don't love each other. Then he confides in her that his dad walked out on his family when he was young. They move past it since it's a weird thing to talk about on a first date but she takes it as evidence that this whole feeling comfortable saying stuff way to soon thing isn't just her. They talk about Barb a bit, she tells him about how they've been best friends since first grade, which amazes him. She asks him how long he's known his best friend. He says his little brother is his best friend. Which she finds wonderfully endearing. And she loves the way he says it, with no shame at all.

One beer turns into two and the conversation turns looser. They talk about music for awhile, he's really passionate about music. Their tastes overlap a bit at least, though she can tell he listens to way more different stuff than her. He happens to mention his vinyl collection. She ribs him for it, calling him a hipster. He's mock-offended but takes the joke. Then she gets really loose and even blurts out that she writes a little bit of poetry. A fact no one else on earth but Barb knows. She instantly regrets it but he's just fascinated and says he'd love to read it some day, but doesn't pressure her on it at all. Some day, *maybe*, she says.

They're both starting to get hungry so they finish their beers and leave. One of the best places to get a hot dog in the whole of New York City is further down the street so they go there. Then they stroll around almost the entirety of Central Park because they just got lost in conversation. He then walks her home. By the time they're outside her place she knows his work schedule and commits it to heart. He tentatively asks if she wants to go out again next Friday. She says yes instantly. His smile warms her heart. They exchange numbers.

"Well um, I had a great time tonight," he says.

"Me too."

"So uh, I'll see you."

"Soon."

"Yeah," he smiles. "Good night."

"Night," she answers.

He turns around. She watches him walk away. Thinks for a second. Screw it. She hurries after him, catching him after a few steps. She taps him on the shoulder. He turns around. She stands up on her tiptoes and presses a kiss to his lips.

"Good night," she says again.

"Yeah," is all he musters.

They share another smile before parting again, for real this time.

"So that went well," Barb says when she walks into the apartment.

"Were you watching us from the window?" She sighs.

"No!" Barb denies. She raises her eyebrows at her to get a confession out. "Well, maybe a little. I just happened to be reading by it."

"You never sit by the window when you read," she notes.

"Change is good. But come on, tell me," Barb urges.

"Yeah it was, it was good. He's sweet. We're going out again on Friday. He asked me."

"Great! Hey, how 'bout coffee on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday then?"

Author's Note:

That mentioning of Nancy writing poetry I borrowed from one of many adorable headcanons the awesome @chidi-anagonye posted on Tumblr.